

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ENGINEER'S THUMB.

By Sir A. Conan Doyle.

OF ALL the problems which have been submitted to my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, for solution during the years of our intimacy, there were only two which I was the means of introducing to his notice—that of Mr. Hatherley's thumb and that of Col. Warburton's madness. Of these the latter may have afforded a finer field for an acute and original observer, but the other was so strange in its inception and so dramatic in its details, that it may be the more worthy of being placed upon record, even if it gave my friend fewer openings for those deductive methods of reasoning by which he achieved such remarkable results. The story, as I believe, been told more than once in the newspapers. But, like all such narratives, it has been told in a less striking manner than it deserves. I have now before me a copy of the "Daily Mail" which contains a full and complete account of the case, and I have been able to compare it with the original report which I received from Mr. Hatherley himself. I have been able to do this because I have been able to see Mr. Hatherley, and I have been able to see him in the same room in which he was when he was first brought to me by the police. I have been able to do this because I have been able to see him in the same room in which he was when he was first brought to me by the police. I have been able to do this because I have been able to see him in the same room in which he was when he was first brought to me by the police.

One morning, at a little before 7 o'clock, I was awakened by the maid tapping at the door, to announce that two men had come to see Mr. Hatherley, and were waiting in the consulting room. I dressed hurriedly, for I knew by experience that railway cases were seldom trivial, and hastened down the stairs. As I descended, my old ally, the guard, came out of the room and closed the door tightly behind him. "I've got here," he whispered, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "He's all right."

"What is it, then?" I asked, for his manner suggested that it was some strange creature which he had caged up in my room. "It's a new patient," he whispered. "I thought I'd bring him round myself, then we couldn't slip away. The fellow is all safe and sound. I must go now, doctor. I have my dooties, just the same as you. And off he went, this trusty tout, without even giving me time to thank him."

I entered my consulting room and found a gentleman seated by the table. He was quietly dressed in a suit of heather tweed, with a soft cloth cap which he had laid down upon his books. Round one of his hands he had a handkerchief which was stained with blood stains. He was young, not more than five and twenty, I should say, with a strong, masculine face. But he was exceedingly pale, and gave me the impression of a man who was suffering from some strong agitation, which it took all his strength of mind to control.

"I am sorry to knock you up so early, doctor," said he, "but I have had a very serious accident during the night. I came in this morning, and I am inquiring at Paddington, where I might find a doctor, a worthy fellow very kindly escorted me here. I gave him a card, and he said that she has left it upon the side table."

"Much in the way of proof with which to back it up; and, even if they believe me, the clues which I can give them are so vague that it is a question whether justice will be done."

"Ha!" I cried, "if it is anything in the nature of a problem which you desire solved, I should strongly recommend you to my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes before you go to the official police."

"Oh, I have heard of that fellow," answered my visitor, "and I should be very glad if he would take the matter off my hands. I must use the official police, well, would you give me an introduction to him?"

"I'll do better. I'll take you round to him myself."

"I should be immensely obliged to you."

"We'll call a cab and go together. We shall just be in time to have a little breakfast with him. Do you feel equal to it?"

"Yes, I shall not feel easy until I have told my story."

"Then my servant will call a cab, and I shall be with you in an instant."

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"The work appears to be light and the pay sufficient."

"Precisely so. We shall want you to come tonight by the last train."

"Where to?"

"To Eynford, in Berkshire. It is a little place near the border of Oxfordshire, and within seven miles of Reading. There is a train from Paddington which would bring you there at about 11:15."

"Very good."

"I shall come down in a carriage to meet you."

"There is a drive, then?"

"Yes, I saw it by the side-lights when I was stepping into the carriage. It was a chequer-board."

"Thank you. I am sorry to have interrupted you. Pray continue your most interesting statement."

"I was sitting in the carriage, and I was looking out of the window at the country. It was a very beautiful country, and I was very much interested in it."

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"The merest fabrication, for it would be absurd to suppose that so powerful an engine could be designed for so inadequate a purpose. The walls were of iron, and when I came to examine it I could see a crust of metallic deposit all over it. I had stooped and was scraping this to see exactly what it was when I heard a muttered exclamation in German and saw the cadaverous face of the colored looking down at me."

"What are you doing there?" he asked.

"I felt angry at having been tricked by so elaborate a story as that which he had told me. 'I was admiring your engine,' said I. 'I think that I should be able to advise you as to your machine if I knew what the exact purpose was for which it was used.'"

"The instant I uttered the words I regretted the rashness of my speech. His face set hard and a baleful light dawned in his eyes. He turned and looked at me, and I saw that he was angry. He turned and looked at me, and I saw that he was angry. He turned and looked at me, and I saw that he was angry."

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"It not for the ugly wound upon my hand, all that had passed during those dreadful hours might have been an evil dream."

"He dashed I went into the station, and asked about the morning train. There would be one to Reading in less than an hour. The same porter was on duty, I found, but he had been there when I arrived. I inquired of him whether he had ever heard of Colonel Lysander Stark. The name was strange to him. Had he observed a carriage the night before waiting for me? No, he had not. Was there a police station anywhere near? There was one about three miles off, his cuttings."

"It was too far for me to go, weak and ill as I was. I determined to wait until I got back to town before telling my story to the police. It was a little past 6 when I arrived, so I went first to have my wound dressed, and then the doctor was kind enough to bring me along here, put the case into your hands, and shall do exactly what you advise."

"We were sat in silence for some little time after listening to this extraordinary narrative. Then Sherlock Holmes pulled down from the shelf one of the ponderous commonplace books in which he placed all the scraps of news which interested him. "Here is an advertisement which will interest you," said he. "It appeared in all the papers about a year ago. Listen to this: 'Lost, on the 24th inst., Mr. Jeremiah Hayling, aged 26, a hydraulic engineer. Left his lodgings at 10 o'clock at night, and has not been heard of since. Who ever saw him, or has any information as to his whereabouts, please send the same to Scotland Yard or to Mr. Hayling at 10, Eynford Road, Eynford.'"

"There you are," said he. "That circle is drawn at a radius of ten miles from the village. The place we want must be somewhere on this line. You said ten miles, I think, sir."

"It was an hour's good drive."

"And you think that they brought you back all that way when you were unconscious?"



A Woman Bent Over Me, a Candle in Her Right Hand.

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